

Middle School Activity Breaks

Background/Rationale

Recent studies in Texas have found a correlation between physically fit students and academic achievement. In particular, results from FITNESSGRAM tests and PASS & CATCH have shown that students who are physically fit are more likely to do well on standardized tests. FITNESSGRAM results also found an association between physical activity and good school attendance as well as fewer disciplinary referrals.

Based on the evidence that students learn better when they are physically fit, we have provided a list of activity breaks for use in and outside of the classroom. Activity breaks are classroom-based physical activities that can incorporate subject content and allow students to be physically active while learning. Activity breaks can be inserted at the beginning of class to energize the students, in the middle of class to break up the work load, or at the end of class as a review. Basically, activity breaks can be used at any point during the class period at the teacher's discretion.

Creating a Physically Active Classroom

- Safety is a key! Make sure all objects are out of the way for safe movement (e.g. book bags).
- Establish ground rules and expectations (examples include: setting safe boundaries, moving with control and awareness of others, listening and following directions). Make sure each student understands the teacher's expectations prior to the start of the activity.
- Plan the activity in advance.
- Set a time limit for the activity before beginning movement and share this information with students.
- Give clear and concise instructions prior to starting the activity.
- Establish a start signal (e.g., "When I say GO, you will begin walking around the classroom. Ready, GO!").
- Establish a stop signal, such as a "STOP" or "FREEZE" command, a clap, or raised hand.
- Create a positive environment that supports physical activity and that values each child based on individual physical abilities.
- Feel free to motivate with music! (Music can also be used as a start and stop signal.)
- Model enthusiasm for physical activity and participate in the activity!
- Expect Success! Assume all students can, and want, to be active – including those with special needs.

What to Expect

These 5-10 minute activity breaks were gathered from teachers, the CATCH 6-8 Activity Box, and East Carolina University Middle School Energizers. Feel free to use them as directed, or tailor them to suit your subject area, activity space, and time allotment.

If you'd like to submit an activity to be added to the CATCHy Ideas Kit, please fax your submissions to the Attention of: CATCH Middle School Program, CATCHy Ideas Kit Activity Break Submission at (512) 346.6802.

Any Subject

1. Over, Under, Around, and Through
2. Meet Me in the Middle
3. 10-Second Fitness
4. Team Quiz Hustle
5. Fictional Charades
6. Guess Who
7. Everybody is a Star
8. Poker Fitness
9. Toe-To-Toe
10. Chapter Review Charades
11. Don't Throw Your Food, Just the Ball
12. True or False
13. Crazy Questions
14. Two-X-Two Fitness
15. Ask Somebody
16. Hot Tamale
17. Alphabet Soup
18. Scatter Fitness

Language Arts

19. Classroom Fables
20. Parts of Speech Go Round
21. Poetry Round-Up

Math

22. Stop and Solve
23. Over and Under
24. Zero In

Science

25. Simon Says Body Systems
26. To Infinity and Beyond
27. Shake, Bake, Twist, and Mist

Social Studies

28. Human Time Line
29. Miles Apart
30. Where Is It? (N, S, E, or W)
Directional Jump

Sources:

- Science Middle-School Energizers. East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthy Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch
- CATCH Physical Education Teacher's Guidebook Grades K-8
- PASS & CATCH
- Texas Education Agency, "Physically fit students more likely to do well in school, less likely to be disciplinary problems," news release, March 9, 2009.

Over, Under, Around, and Through

Activity Break #1

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: 2 short ropes, scarves, or pieces of cloth/paper per group

Organization: Students are scattered throughout the classroom in groups of 3. In each group, 2 members of the group face one another and “hold hands” with pieces of cloth. The third member or “runner” of the group stands to one side facing his or her partners.

Description:

1. The game begins when the teacher calls out a sequence of movements based on the commands Over/Under/Around/Through.
2. Only those 4 commands are used in the game, but they may be used in any sequence and number.
 - a. For instance, if the commands were “Over, under, over, around,” the “runner” in each group would try to complete the sequence as quickly as possible on the “go” command. He or she would be required to go “over” the linked hands, “under” the hands, “over” the hands, then completely “around” both partners.
 - b. To go “through” the partners, the 2 group members facing one another would create a circle (1 set of hands up and the other set down) large enough (about the size of a hula hoop in vertical position) for the “runner” to walk through.
3. Each person in the group should get a chance to be the “runner” and complete the sequence before the teacher calls out a new sequence.
4. Determine how many commands the students can accurately remember.

Now try this:

1. Ask each group of 3 to pick another group they want to challenge.
2. Invite 1 of the groups to pick the next movement sequence.

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 11.

Meet Me in the Middle

Activity Break #2

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization: Students are paired with a partner. Partners stand on opposite sides of the classroom (or hallway) facing each other, one on one.

Description:

1. Call out an activity to do. Students walk to the center and meet their partner to do the activity.
2. After completing the activity, students turn and walk back to their original places.
3. Add 1 activity each time. For example: 1st time – meet partner in the middle and do a right-handed high five. 2nd time – right-handed high five, add left-handed high five. 3rd time – right-handed high five, left-handed high five, call out favorite physical activity.
4. Add more of the activities: left-handed low five, over the top (back to back), shoot through legs (back to back), right shoe sole, left shoe sole, curl-up five.

Now try this:

1. Determine which pair of students can accurately remember the most combinations.
2. Talk with the PE teacher and utilize fitness activities that students are learning in PE or already know from past PE lessons. Surprise your class with what you know!

10 - Second Fitness

Activity Break #3

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization: Students are paired with a partner and stand at a line (or imaginary line) on the floor.

Description:

1. Students perform the teacher-designated fitness activity (see examples below) for 10 seconds.
2. As 1 student performs the activity, the other partner counts the number of repetitions.
3. The students switch, and partner #2 does the activity. Ask students to do the activity as quickly as they can.

Fitness Activity examples:

1. Forward straddle jump (over the line)
2. Side straddle jump (over the line)
3. Side jumps (over the line)
4. Front and back jumps (over the line)
5. Right foot jump (over the line)
6. Left foot jump (over the line)
7. Scissor jump (over the line)

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 23.

Team Quiz Hustle

Activity Break #4

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: 4 designated stations in the classroom (no equipment is needed), 4 Quiz/Physical Activity cards (pieces of paper/card stock for quiz question and activity)

Organization:

1. Create 4 quiz/physical activity cards (1 card per station). Write a quiz question on 1 side of the card and a physical activity on the other side of the card (e.g., 20 jumping jacks, jog in place for 30 seconds, imaginary jump rope for 25 seconds).
2. Place a quiz question/physical activity card at each numbered station. The card should be placed with the quiz question face down and the physical activity face up.
3. Divide the class into teams of 3 to 4, with each team starting at a different exercise station (the number of stations may vary).
4. Write the answers to the questions on separate pieces of paper that are numbered according to the station and taped to the chalkboard face down.

Description:

1. On signal, the team performs the physical activity and then turns the card over to read the question. As a team, they decide on the answer, and 1 person walks to the chalkboard to determine if the group has the correct answer.
2. If their answer is correct, they proceed to the next station.
3. If their answer is incorrect, they go back to the station and repeat the activity. They then move to the next station and repeat the sequence.
4. The first team to complete all stations is the winner.

Now Try This:

1. Create math, science, health, language arts, or social studies questions.

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 78.

Fictional Charades

Activity Break #5

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization: Groups of 2 to 3

Description:

1. Students should write or have written an expressive account (fictional or autobiographical).
2. Students find a partner (teacher can pair students if necessary).
3. Students identify 2 to 3 significant events from their narrative and act them out.
4. Partners guess the gestures for a few minutes, and then the actor shows their partner the written account.
5. The guessing partner offers input (i.e., is it appropriate for the story, does it need more detail, is it worded the way the student imitated it?).

Now try this:

1. Students can do this activity when introducing inference.
2. Ask students to come up to the front and act out a word (like charades); the other students guess the word, which can include the following:
 - a. Frightened
 - b. Lucky
 - c. Happy
 - d. Tired
 - e. Confused
 - f. Angry

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Guess Who

Activity Break #6

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Colored index cards (2 colors) - On 1 set of cards, the teacher writes the names of characters from a story or a novel, or historical figures, etc. On the other set of the cards the teacher writes character traits, or facts that correspond to the characters/figures.

Organization: Assigns ALL students a number from 1 to 4

Description:

1. Shuffle the cards and place them in 4 numbered (1-4) corners of the room.
2. On signal, students pick up 1 card from their designated corner.
3. Students should then be instructed to move around the room and find their partner to link the character to the appropriate trait. Instruct students not to give verbal cues.
4. After each student finds his or her partner, students take turns acting out their character while the class guesses the character.

Now try this:

1. Use sticky notes instead of index cards. Place the sticky notes on the students' backs and have them find their partner without speaking.
2. Use multiple traits per character.
3. If using white index cards, use 2 differently colored markers for traits and characters.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Everybody is a Star

Activity Break #7

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Pen and paper for the Journalist group

Organization: Students should be walking around the classroom throughout this activity.

Description:

1. Divide the class into 2 groups: Journalists and Super Stars.
2. Ask the Journalist group to write 3 to 5 questions a journalist would ask a Super Star.
3. Ask the Super Star group to pick a super star they would like to be. They are not to vocalize who they are, but should be able to answer journalist questions based on the character they have chosen for themselves.
4. The Journalists have 5 minutes to interview as many Super Stars as they can, asking only the 3 or 5 questions they wrote down.
5. The Super Stars can never directly say their name or exactly what it is that they do. The Super Star group must constantly be walking because celebrities are very busy.
6. The journalists try to guess who the Super Stars are based on the answers to their questions.
7. After 5 minutes, the Super Stars reveal who they are and the Journalists check to see if their guesses were correct.
8. Ask the groups to switch roles.

Now try this:

1. Journalists write an article about Super Stars. Super Stars write a reflective entry about their interviews. Incorporate writing techniques like persuasive writing and inferences. Share students' work with the entire class.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Poker Fitness

Activity Break #8

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Copies of Poker Fitness Key Cards, regular deck of cards, paper

Organization:

1. Pair students into groups of 2.
2. The teacher creates Poker Fitness Cards (see example on next page) and gives them to each group or places a few cards around the room that students can refer to as needed.
3. Place the deck of regular cards in the center of the activity area.

Description:

1. On signal, 1 player from each group chooses a card from the regular deck that is in the center of the activity area.
2. Students look at the Poker Fitness Key Card and do the activity that corresponds with the card that is drawn (e.g., if the student draws a king, the group will then jog in place for 10 seconds).

Now try this:

1. Conclude every class with this activity. Between each card selection ask the students to summarize what they learned during class that day.

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 229.

Poker Fitness

Activity Break #8, continued

Sample Poker Fitness Key Cards:

KING: Jog in place for 10 seconds.

QUEEN: Jump rope with an imaginary jump rope for 10 seconds.

JACK: 15 wall push-ups

10: 15 jumping jacks

9: 5 knee tuck jumps (knees come to chest when jumping)

8: 10 squats

7: 10 jumping jacks

6: 10 wall push-ups

5: Dance for 10 seconds

4: 15 straddle jumps

3: 10 straddle jumps

2: Shoot 5 paper balls into the trash can.

ACE: Give the teacher 5 high-fives

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 229.

Toe-To-Toe

Activity Break #9

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization: Students are scattered in a 20 x 20 yard area, or in the classroom. This activity can be used as an introduction to class every day to get students mentally and physically “warmed up.”

Description:

1. As students enter the classroom, greet them at the door and ask them to put their belongings down, and begin to walk around the classroom, in no particular pattern.
2. When all of the students are in the classroom, tell them to quickly find someone and get “toe-to-toe” with that person.
3. Instruct the students to greet their toe-to-toe partner and exchange names.
4. Ask the students to share with their partner something they learned in class the day before, and then march in place.
5. Once everyone is marching, instruct the students to march to another partner and get elbow-to-elbow with that person.
6. Instruct the students to greet their elbow-to-elbow partner and exchange names.
7. Ask the students to share with their new partner a question about what they learned yesterday, and then do 10 jumping jacks.
8. Students should continue exchanging partners and sharing different types of information until the class is sufficiently “warmed up.”
9. Tell the students to go to their seats, and then have a few of them share the questions they had about yesterday’s lessons.

Now try this:

1. Conclude every class with this activity, summarizing what they learned during class that day.
2. Possible “partner” commands: knees, pinkies, thumbs, shoulders, backs, hips, heels, etc.
3. Teach anatomy by using anatomical names for “partner” commands.
4. Possible activity commands: walk, march, touch an object in the classroom, perform a set of wall push-ups, jumping jacks, etc.
5. Possible “share with your partner” commands: a physical activity you did with your family over the weekend, what you did in PE class today, what you want to be when you grow up, etc.

Chapter Review Charades

Activity Break #10

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Flashcards, timer

Organization: Groups of 3

Description:

1. In this activity, students will play charades and compete in small groups.
2. The teacher prepares a set of cards with various concepts and vocabulary words from the objective covered in class.
3. One member of the group picks a card, and then acts out the concept for his or her group.
4. The group has 2 minutes to guess the concept; group members must march or jog in place until they guess the correct answer or time expires.

Examples:

1. Create a set of cards using a book the students were asked to read. Each card could be a character from the book.
2. Create a set of cards based on physical activities (e.g., tennis, volleyball, golf, washing dishes, vacuuming).

Now try this:

1. Call out a concept, and each group talks about how to physically illustrate the concept.
2. Each group acts out a concept for the class, summarizing what they learned during class that day.
3. Play charades as a class and ask students to come to the front of the class and perform the concept.
4. Create a set of cards of rival school mascot characters.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Don't Throw Your Food, Just the Ball

Activity Break #11

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Health Education

Equipment: A paper ball or a soft foam ball for each group

Organization: Groups of 6

Description:

1. Divide the class into groups of 6 and tell group members to stand in a circle.
2. Each group should have a ball. Students begin throwing the ball in a pattern. They will always throw to the same person (e.g., Robert always throws to Susan, Susan always to Bill, Bill always to Joe, and so on, and the pattern repeats when the ball reaches the first person again). While students are throwing the ball, ask them to march or jog in place.
3. Once a pattern has been established, the teacher will call out “GO,” “SLOW,” or “WHOA.”
4. Students must name a food in that food category before throwing the ball to the next person. For example, when the teacher calls out “GO food,” the student says “apple” and then passes the ball. (Set a time limit, i.e., student may only hold the ball for 5 seconds.)
5. Allow several students in each group to name a GO food before calling out a different category. See GO, SLOW, WHOA description below.

Now try this:

1. Call out a food group from the Food Guide Pyramid and ask students to name GO foods from that group (e.g., Meat and Beans: turkey).
2. Call out fast food items and ask students to suggest healthier fast food alternatives for those items (e.g., Double cheeseburger with bacon: regular cheeseburger; Large french fries: small french fries).

GO, SLOW, WHOA Description:

In the CATCH program, foods are categorized into 3 groups: *GO*, *SLOW*, and *WHOA*.

GO foods are lower in fat and/or sugar, and/or they are whole foods (that is, less processed). *GO foods* include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, skim or 1% milk, and low-fat dairy products.

SLOW foods are higher in fat and/or sugar, and/or they are more processed than *GO foods*. *SLOW foods* include vegetables with added butter or a cheese sauce, fruits with added sugar, pancakes, white rice, baked french fries, chicken with the skin, and 2% milk.

WHOA foods are highest in fat and/or sugar, and/or they are the most processed. *WHOA foods* include candy, cookies, fried foods, regular hamburgers, ice cream, whole milk, soft drinks and sugary cereals.

Source: Adapted from East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

True or False

Activity Break #12

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. Call out a series of statements such as:
 - a. Your heart is a muscle. (True)
 - b. White bread is more nutritious than whole-wheat bread. (False)
 - c. Exercise makes your heart stronger. (True)
 - d. The main function of the heart is to supply oxygen to your body. (True)
 - e. Milk does not give you strong bones. (False)
 - f. You should be eating 5 cups of fruits and vegetables every day. (True)
 - g. Blood does not transport the oxygen from the heart to other parts of the body. (False)
 - h. The main sources of protein are meat, fish, and beans. (True)
 - i. You have muscles that move even when you don't think to tell them to. (True)
2. Students respond to each of these statements by marching in place if the answer is false and doing jumping jacks if the answer is true (set time limit of 10 seconds for the physical activity).
3. Instruct students to make larger movements—such as jogging in place or doing lunges—to increase the intensity for true or false statements.

Now try this:

1. Choose different movements for true and false answers.
2. Have a brief discussion as to why each statement was true or false.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Crazy Questions

Activity Break #13

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization:

1. This activity is a form of group jeopardy. The teacher selects a list of vocabulary words or a set of questions from the end of a chapter. Students are grouped into 4 teams. They must complete a task to receive each question. When each student in a group has completed an assigned task, the students must raise their hands to receive a question and then provide the answer as a group.

Description:

1. Call out the task for the groups:
 - a. To receive the first question, students must jump to the sky and slap the floor with their hand. Repeat 5 times.
 - b. To receive the second question, students must hop on 1 foot while turning in a circle 10 times.
 - c. To receive the third question, students must jog in place for 30 seconds.
 - d. To receive the fourth question, students must do imaginary jump rope as fast as possible for 10 seconds.
 - e. To receive the fifth question, students must complete all previous movements again, but one right after the other.
2. When the groups complete their task and raise their hands, identify 1 student from each group to receive a question. This student then relays the question to his or her group members.
3. The group should work together to provide an answer and then tell the teacher their answer.
4. Tell the students whether their answer is correct or incorrect and give them their next task.

Now try this:

1. This activity can be used for sequencing, listening skills, auditory procession, and multiple intelligences.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Two-x-Two Fitness

Activity Break #14

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Copies of the Two-x-Two Fitness cards, and writing utensils.

Organization:

1. Each card should have a list of activities that each student is to complete with a partner.
(Note: the number of activities listed should be determined by the amount of time allotted for this activity.)
2. Students can find a new partner for each task or perform all tasks with the same partner.
This is determined by the teacher.
3. The teacher should be in a central location during the activity and face all students so that they can hear the commands.
4. Provide a box of pencils if the students are to record their work.

Description:

1. Students are given a Two-x-Two Fitness card and are asked to find a partner.
2. The teacher establishes start and stop signals for each activity (e.g., clapping once, twice, or 3 times).
3. Signal the group to begin completing their fitness card.
4. Signal the group to stop. Ask the class how many activities they were able to complete.

Now try this:

1. Ask the PE teacher for some suggestions for activities for the Two-x-Two Fitness card.
2. Offer extra credit towards an assignment for students who complete at least half of their Two-x-Two Fitness card.

Source: CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 9.

Two-X-Two Fitness

Activity Break #14, Continued

Name: _____ Date: _____

You will need a partner for these activities. You do not have to do the activities in the order they are presented. Sign each other's card after you have performed the task.

You and somebody:	Partner Initials
Do 15 wall push-ups.	
Name a physical activity that you enjoy.	
Name your favorite GO snack.	
Do 15 toe touches.	
Stand on your tip toes for 10 seconds.	
Name 5 GO foods.	
Jog in place for 30 seconds.	
Name a physical activity you do with your family.	
Do a 30-second dance.	
High-five your classroom teacher.	

Source: Adapted from CATCH Grades 6-8 Activity Box: Card # 9.

Ask Somebody...

Activity Break #15

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Each student should have a copy of the Ask Somebody Activity Sheet and a writing utensil.

Organization: Students should be scattered throughout the classroom.

Description:

1. Distribute the Ask Somebody Activity Sheet.
2. Give the students 3 minutes to complete their sheet.
3. Signal the group to stop and ask a few volunteers to share their findings.

Now try this:

1. Give the students less time to complete the activity sheet. Provide a healthy award/reward for the person with the most completed sheet.
2. Create an Ask Somebody Study Sheet to use for a quiz or test review.

Source: Modified Icebreaker, original source unknown.

Ask Somebody...

Activity Break #15

Ask Somebody...	What did they say?	Who said/did it?
To do 10 jumping jacks with you.		
To name his or her favorite GO food.		
To jog in place for 10 seconds.		
To name his or her favorite physical activity.		
To do 3 push-ups with you.		
To name 1 thing he or she learned in class today.		
To do 10 wall push-ups.		
To tell the teacher, "Thank You."		
To do 10 jumping jacks in 10 seconds.		

Hot Tamale

Activity Break #16

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. Write each direction and corresponding activity on the board or overhead to make them easier for the students to follow:
 - Move backwards - back stroke (swimming motion)
 - Move forward - march in place
 - Move to either side - side stretch in the direction of the hot tamale
 - Up higher - climbing ladder motion
 - Down lower - squats
 - Within 1 foot of the tamale - students pretend they are stepping on hot coals (in place)
2. One student exits the classroom.
3. The rest of the class watches the teacher hide the “hot tamale” (can be any object) somewhere in the classroom.
4. The student who exited the classroom re-enters.
5. The rest of the class tries to guide him or her to the hidden tamale by performing various physical activities, with each activity corresponding to a different direction. Students are not allowed to talk.
6. Once the student locates the hidden “hot tamale,” another student is selected to exit the classroom, and the “hot tamale” is hidden in another location so that the game can be repeated.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Alphabet Soup

Activity Break #17

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: Alphabet blocks or letter tiles (2 sets) divided into 4 stations around the room; additional sets may be needed for vowels

Organization: Divide the students into teams of 4; assign each student his or her own number.

Description:

1. The object of this activity is for students to correctly spell vocabulary words.
2. Call out a vocabulary word related to the subject area.
3. Call out a number. The student with that number will get 1 letter from a station and return to the group. All students remain moving (e.g., marching in place) for the entire activity.
4. Continue calling out numbers. Students take turns getting letters until a team has spelled the word correctly.
5. The first team to spell the word correctly will earn a point.
6. Continue until all words have been spelled.

Now try this:

1. Perform the activity as above and then ask teams to make a sentence with the vocabulary words or to define the vocabulary word.
2. Make new laminated alphabet cards.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Scatter Fitness

Activity Break #18

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Any subject

Equipment: None needed, but music can be complementary.

Organization: Students should be scattered throughout the classroom.

Description:

1. Explain or demonstrate 2 to 3 fitness activities (see fitness activities below).
2. Establish signals for each activity, including a stop signal (e.g., 1 clap = walking in place; raising 1 hand = marching; 3 claps = stop activity).
3. Begin the activity with a fitness activity from below (e.g., jogging in place).
4. Students perform the activity until the teacher gives the next signal (e.g., 1 clap = walking in place).
5. Continue this sequence until all activities have been done, repeating if time permits.
6. Toward the end, combine all activities taught, one right after the other, then give the stop signal.

Scatter Fitness Activities:

- Walking
- Marching
- Jogging in place
- Knee ups
- Jumping jacks
- Straddle jumps
- Side jumps
- Ocean wave: a group wave from left to right with hands flying up then down, or students jumping up then down.

Now try this:

1. Talk with the PE teacher and utilize fitness activities that students are learning in PE or already know from past PE lessons. Surprise your class with what you know!

Classroom Fables

Activity Break #19

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Language Arts

Equipment: None

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. The teacher reviews various sentence parts.
2. The teacher lists sentence parts on the chalk board, along with corresponding physical activities for each sentence part:
 - Article - hop on 1 foot 5 times
 - Noun - walk in place 5 paces
 - Verb - jog in place 5 steps
 - Adverb - touch elbow to knee 5 times
 - Adjective - 5 jumping jacks
 - Pronoun - 5 squats
 - Preposition - 5 knee lifts
 - Conjunction - 5 toe touches
3. The student who sits in the first seat on the first row of desks says 1 word to begin a sentence (i.e., "The").
4. All students complete the corresponding activity for that sentence part.
5. The 2nd student in that row then adds another word (i.e., "green") and students complete the corresponding activity for that sentence part.
6. This continues, going down each row, until the class creates their own silly story, each student adding 1 word at a time to form a sentence.

Now try this:

1. This activity can also be used in foreign language classes.

Example from a 7th grade class:

Bob ate a rat with a pig foot that made a great stench. When Kelly was a little girl she did exercises regularly. So, they started doing things like dancing and singing and cooking chicken casseroles with macaroni and peas that were awesome to eat at dinner. Then we went home.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Parts of Speech Go Round

Activity Break #20

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Language Arts

Equipment: Index cards (1 per student)

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. Divide index cards into 3 groups and label each group as follows:
 - Group 1: Different parts of speech (e.g., noun)
 - Group 2: Corresponding definitions for those parts of speech (e.g., a word that is the name of a person, place, or thing)
 - Group 3: Examples of those parts of speech (e.g., boy)
2. Pass index cards out randomly. (Note: Depending on the class size, more than 1 index card in the example category may be needed.)
3. On the “Go” signal, the students move around the room to find the matching cards (e.g., the student with the noun card finds the student with the definition of a noun and the student with the example of a noun).
4. Students should move around the room to find their matches.
5. Once students find the correct matching card, they jog in place until all the other students in the class find their matching cards.

Now try this:

1. Vocabulary: place word on 1 index card and its definition on another.
2. Characterization: place character on 1 card and personality traits of that character on another.
3. Designate a movement for each part of speech (e.g., noun = hop on 1 foot; pronoun = jump).

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Poetry Round-Up

Activity Break #21

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Language Arts

Equipment: Index cards; poem

(Note: If the poem is long, this activity may involve the entire class, or the class can be divided into small groups using shorter poems.)

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. The teacher writes 1 line from the selected poem on each index card and gives each student one of these index cards.
2. Students move around the room to determine the order of the poem (this is easier with a short, rhyming poem).
3. Once students have the order, they stand in line and recite the poem, each participant saying his or her line while completing a physical activity (e.g., hopping on 1 foot, etc.).

Now try this:

1. Place each line of the poem on separate strips of paper. Place the paper strips in an envelope or hat and let the students randomly select 1 strip of paper.
2. Use a transparency to show the final organization.
3. For small groups, put the lines from the same poem on matching colored index cards.
4. If using a long poem, use stanzas instead of 1 line on the index cards.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Stop and Solve

Activity Break #22

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Mathematics

Equipment: Piece of paper and pencil for every 2 students

Organization: Students stand at desks with partners

Description:

1. Call out a physical activity:
 - Twisting
 - Jogging
 - Jumping Jacks
 - Knee lifts
 - Playing air guitar
 - Tennis
2. Students begin the physical activity and continue until the teacher writes an equation on the board and calls it out.
3. Students should freeze, and partners should begin to work together to try to solve the equation correctly on a piece of paper.
4. After 10 to 15 seconds, say, "Pencils down!" (for safety), and then calls out a new activity.
5. Continue until all equations are used.
6. As students cool down, write the correct answers on the board, and students check their work.

Now try this:

1. Do the same physical activities, but ask students to translate verbal expressions into algebraic expressions.
2. Use this activity to reinforce solving 1-and-2 step linear equations.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Over and Under

Activity Break #23

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Mathematics

Equipment: 10 paper balls per team; math problems or word problems from textbook

Organization: Students should be grouped into lines of 5.

Description:

1. Teams stand in a single-file line. Each team has 10 paper balls at the back of its line.
2. Call out a word problem or math problem (or writes it on the overhead) that requires addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. (Note: The answer to the problem can be no higher than 10).
Example: $\text{> } (50 \div 10) + (2 \times 2) = 9$
3. Students figure out the answer to the problem.
4. Students pass the balls up the row alternating an over-the-head and between-the-legs style, until the correct number of balls—that is, the number equal to the solution to the math problem—is at the front of the line. They should pass only 1 ball at a time.
5. As balls are passed forward the student in the front of the line should place the balls on a table or on the floor.
6. The first team with the correct number gets 1 point. Students then pass the balls (in the same manner) to the back of the line in 30 seconds or less to get ready for the next problem.
7. Students perform 15 jumping jacks, march in place, or jog in place shots before the next word problem is called out.

Now try this:

1. Students may pass balls side to side, that is alternating the left side of one person and then right side of the next, instead of over or under.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Zero In

Activity Break #24

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Mathematics

Equipment: Card stock/piece of paper with a number or equation

Organization:

1. Students stand at their desks.
2. The teacher should prepare several cards/pieces of paper with a number or equation (e.g., 283; 50×7).

Description:

1. The object of this activity is for 1 student to correctly guess a number with the aid of his or her classmates.
2. The student does this by receiving movement clues from the class until she or he has “zeroed in” on the correct number.
3. Select 1 student to come to the front and stand facing the class.
4. The teacher stands behind the student and holds up the equation/number card for the rest of the class to see (without the student in the front of the class seeing the card).
5. Direct the student to call out a number between 1 and 500 (or an alternative range based on the identified number or equation answer).
6. The class helps the student “zero in” to guess the number on the card by squatting if the student needs to guess lower or jumping up and down if the student needs to guess higher.
7. Based on these responses from the class, the student continues to call out numbers until he or she correctly guesses the number.

Now try this:

1. Perform the activity as above using division, fractions, algebraic equations, etc.

Source: CATCH Facilitators, 2008.

Simon Says Body Systems

Activity Break #25

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Science

Equipment: Student-created flash cards with names of organs, pictures of organs, names of body systems, pictures of body systems

Organization: Students stand at desks with partners

Description:

1. The teacher shows students a note card that says, for example, “Simon says use this” or “point to this” or “Simon says point to an organ not in this system.”
2. Students perform the action requested.
3. Students are “out” if they do the action and Simon didn’t say to! If the student is out, he or she must do 10 sit-ups or 5 push-ups (adjust to the teacher’s discretion). Then students may rejoin the game.

Now try this:

1. Repeat the activity, but ask students to close their eyes. They cannot rely on their neighbor with their eyes closed, and it is fun to watch them try to point to different organs with their eyes closed.

Source: Rochelle Bell, Science Department, Kealing Middle School (Austin ISD).

To Infinity and Beyond

Activity Break #26

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 5 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Science

Equipment: None

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. The teacher writes the following 4 solar system vocabulary words and corresponding physical activities on the board:
 - Constellation – shake or wiggle
 - Telescope – squat down and jump toward the ceiling
 - Sun – twist
 - Galaxy – jog in place or walk on the moon
 - Universe – touch head, shoulders, knees, and toes
2. The teacher reads a statement from below that describes 1 of the 4 vocabulary words.
3. Examples:
 - Its diameter is 100 times greater than the diameter of the earth. (sun)
 - The Milky Way (galaxy)
 - Group of stars that form a pattern in the sky (constellation)
 - Placed on mountain tops and in rural areas (telescopes)
 - One of countless stars in space (sun)
 - Contains billions of galaxies (universe)
 - Uses a curved mirror that gathers light (telescope)
 - Groups of millions or billions of stars (galaxy)
 - All of the planets orbit this. (sun)
 - This contains everything. (universe)
 - Many of these were named after ancient gods. (constellation)
 - A device that gathers electromagnetic radiation (telescope)
4. The students must allow the teacher to finish reading each statement, then determine which vocabulary word the teacher is describing and perform the corresponding activity for 30 seconds.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Shake, Bake, Twist, and Mist

Activity Break #27

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Science/Mathematics

Equipment: None

Organization:

1. Students stand at their desks.
2. Write the following 4 phenomena and corresponding physical activities on the board and demonstrate for students: Earthquake – “shake”; Volcano – “bake”; Tornado – “twist”; Hurricane – “mist.”

Description:

1. Read each statement below, one at a time, in its entirety. Each statement is a clue describing 1 of the 4 phenomena.
2. Phenomena Descriptors (answers):
 - One of these is felt approximately every 30 seconds. (earthquake)
 - Ocean water must be warmer than 81 degrees Fahrenheit for this to occur. (hurricane)
 - This is called a “funnel” until it comes in contact with the ground. (tornado)
 - This generates vibrations called seismic waves. (earthquake)
 - This phenomenon occurs when rock from the earth’s mantle melts and moves up to the surface. (volcano)
 - These weaken when traveling over land or cool ocean waters. (hurricane)
 - These send fiery bits of rock and ash into the air. The fragments that cool and return to the Earth are called “tephra.” (volcano)
 - Winds must be at least 74 miles per hour for a storm to be considered one of these. (hurricane)
 - The molten rock from the Earth’s mantle, or “magma,” that escapes during one of these is called “lava” once it reaches the Earth’s surface. (volcano)
 - In the United States, a “hotbed” for these extends from Texas up through Oklahoma, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. (tornado)
 - Over 1 million of these occur annually, with some too small to be felt by humans. (earthquake)
3. For each statement, students should determine the phenomenon being described and perform the corresponding activity until most of the class is moving that way. Continue this sequence as time permits.

Now try this:

1. Create new descriptors that match these phenomena or a similar activity with another science chapter, like the solar system. (For example: Earth – “swim”; Sun – “bake”; Pluto – “shiver”; Mercury – “sweat”)

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Human Time Line

Activity Break #28

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Social Studies

Equipment: White or colored paper, markers, and a timer/clock with a second hand

Organization:

1. Several students will be asked to stand in front of the room in a line
2. The remaining students stand at their desks
3. Designate a time keeper and recorder from among the students standing at their desks.

Description:

1. Give students a piece of paper with a date written on it to represent a year in history. Be sure to include an equal number of AD and BC years.
2. Give 1 student the year 1 AD and another student the year 1 BC. These students will represent the middle of the time line. This will help students understand there is no “zero” year in history.
3. Ask the students who were given a paper with a date to come to the front of the room by walking, marching, and/or hopping (movements to be decided at the teacher’s discretion).
4. Say “Go,” to signal the students to line up in chronological order quickly but safely. Neither the teacher nor the class can assist them. The student time keeper will start timing the line up. The student recorder will record the time it takes for them to complete this activity. The remaining students in the class will assess the time line for mistakes.
5. This can be repeated with the same group or other students in the classroom.

Now try this:

1. Make sure ALL the students participate. Create various sets of dates in advance, or ask the class to create their own sets of dates. This activity can also be used to introduce a new unit in history. As the students learn how to correctly read and create a time line, they can create a new set of dates for each time period discussed in class and can connect them with previous learning units.
2. As the students become more skilled with time lines, begin to add written events to the dates.

Source: Shirley Hartmann, N.B.C.T., Covington Middle School (Austin ISD).

Miles Apart

Activity Break #29

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Social Studies

Equipment: Rulers, calculators (optional), and a map for each pair of students

Organization: Students stand paired throughout the room

Description:

1. The objective of this activity is for, students to learn how to use a map scale correctly.
2. Create a scale relating movement to distances on the map (e.g., 1 small step = 1 mile, 1 giant step = 10 miles, and 1 jump = 100 miles).
3. Assign students a partner and provide each pair with a map, ruler, and a calculator (if desired).
4. Instruct students to use a map scale to measure the distance between 2 cities or countries. (Choose distances that allow the students to accumulate the most physical activity.)
5. Using the movements on the map scale that they created, students identify which movements should be combined to travel between the 2 points (e.g., If the distance between 2 cities is 121 miles, students take 1 jump, 2 giant steps, and 1 small step).

Now try this:

1. Talk with the PE teacher about coordinating a Walk Across Texas activity.

Source: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.

Where is it? (N, S, E, or W) Directional Jumps

Activity Break #30

Minimum Time Needed for Activity: 10 minutes

Grade Level: 6th - 8th

Subject Area: Social Studies

Equipment: Map of area of study; pointing stick

Organization: Students stand at their desks

Description:

1. Put a map of the world (or of a specific country) on the board and designate a starting place/country.
2. One student is selected (per round) to be the pointer.
 - a. This student will stand at the front of the class and serve as the interpreter for the class's directions, moving the pointer appropriately.
3. Beginning at the starting country, the teacher calls out another country, province, or state on the map, and the class directs the pointer to move north, south, east, or west with the following actions.
 - a. Walking in place = north
 - b. Jumping = south
 - c. Clapping = east
 - d. Waving arms = west
4. When the class reaches the target country, a new pointer is selected, and the game begins again.

Now try this:

1. This activity can be modified to incorporate northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest to provide variety.
2. Students can identify directions to specific landmarks, locations of historic events, etc., within the country.

Source: Adapted from: East Carolina University, Activity Promotion Laboratory in partnership with the NC Department of Public Instruction (Healthful Living and Healthy Schools Sections), the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, Be Active North Carolina, the NC Alliance for Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, and the Physical Activity & Nutrition Branch.